United Nations A/61/581

General Assembly

Distr.: General
16 November 2006

Original: English

Sixty-first session
Agenda item 157
Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies

Letter dated 14 November 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the texts of the Doha Declaration and the Joint Statement adopted at the Sixth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, held in Doha from 29 October to 1 November 2006 (see annex).

The International Conferences of New or Restored Democracies started a distinct Movement to promote democratic values, stimulate a new brand of international cooperation in favour of democratization and bring the new focus to the international development agenda. The previous important five International Conferences were held in: Manila (1988); Managua (1994); Bucharest (1997); Cotonou (2000); and Ulaanbaatar (2003).

Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 58/281 of 9 February 2004, the Sixth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies was organized by the Government of Qatar, the host country, in cooperation with the United Nations. Over 100 States Members participated in the Conference, as did parliamentarians and civil society organizations representing 69 countries and 100 organizations, respectively.

It would be highly appreciated if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session.

(*Signed*) Nassir Abdulaziz **Al-Nasser**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

06-61968 (E) 241106

Annex to the letter dated 14 November 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Doha Declaration

Sixth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies

Doha, 29 October-1 November 2006

Building Capacity for Democracy, Peace and Social Progress

Introduction

We, the ministers and other representatives of Governments around the world gathered at the Sixth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies at Doha, Qatar, from 29 October to 1 November 2006, are determined to adhere to the universal relevance of democratic values, principles and standards, to work together to consolidate and strengthen democratic institutions, and to enhance the linkages between democracy, peace and social progress in the ongoing international dialogue on development,

Preamble and principles

Recognizing that a large number of the States in the world are now participating in the International Conferences of New or Restored Democracies and are working together with a host of parliamentarians, international organizations and a large number of non-governmental organizations active in the field of democracy from around the world,

Recalling, inter alia, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,

Recalling also the Declaration on Social Progress and Development, the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Millennium Declaration,

Emphasizing that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights without distinctions of any kind,

Renewing our conviction that democracy, sustainable development, peace and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are interdependent and mutually reinforcing, and that democracy is based on the freely expressed will of the people to determine their own political, economic, social and cultural systems and their full participation in all aspects of their lives,

Committing to advancing human welfare, freedom and progress everywhere, as well as to encouraging tolerance, respect, dialogue, and cooperation among different cultures, civilizations and peoples,

Reaffirming that strict adherence to the principle of non-discrimination, including in respect to persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, is one of the pivotal elements of democracy,

Acknowledging the rich diversity of the world, and that all cultures and civilizations contribute to the enrichment of humankind and the importance of respect and understanding for religious and cultural diversity throughout the world in order to promote international peace and security,

Acknowledging further that interfaith dialogue and cooperation plays a vital role in promoting democracy,

Committing also to act in the spirit of universally recognized standards of human rights with the purpose of strengthening dialogue and cooperation between states, peoples and individuals, as well as a culture of peace,

Reaffirming our faith in, and support to, the United Nations and our commitment to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the fundamental principles of international law, which are indispensable foundations of a more peaceful, prosperous and just world, and reiterate our determination to foster strict respect for them, and in this regard, commending the Secretary-General and the United Nations system for their continuous efforts to consolidate democracy,

Considering the need to develop home-grown democratic reforms to be pursued taking into account the distinctive cultures and traditions of each society while conforming with the spirit and principles of relevant international instruments,

Recognizing the richness and diversity of democratic political systems and models of free and fair electoral processes in the world, based on national and regional particularities and various backgrounds,

Reaffirming the right of peoples to determine methods and to establish institutions regarding free and fair electoral processes and, consequently, that there is no single model of democracy or of democratic institutions and that States should ensure all the necessary mechanisms and means to facilitate full and effective participation in those processes,

Sharing the resolve to jointly cooperate to discourage and resist the threat to democracy posed by the overthrow of constitutionally elected governments,

Reaffirming the respect for sovereignty and the principle of non-interference in domestic affairs as provided in the Charter of the United Nations,

Condemning unequivocally terrorism in all its forms and manifestations,

Noting with satisfaction the momentum towards democratic governance in various countries of the Middle East, while concerned that continuing inter-State armed conflicts and violence have jeopardized the prospects for a Middle East peace and further democratization,

Reaffirming that the inalienable right of all peoples to self-determination is essential to peace, democracy and social justice,

Condemning foreign occupation, all forms of abduction, targeted killings and destruction of civilian infrastructures,

Recognizing that the concept and parameters of democracy encompass economic, social, cultural as well as political dimensions and that an important aspect of development policy is the relationship between economic and social development on the one hand and democracy, human rights and responsive governance on the other,

1. *Reaffirm* that the International Conferences of New or Restored Democracies[a] over the past eighteen years, since 1988, have enhanced the international dialogue on concepts and principles of democracy and strengthened international cooperation among new and restored democracies with a view to consolidating the integration of democracy, peace and development,

2. *Reaffirm also* the numerous recommendations emanating from the International Conferences on New or Restored Democracies, including, inter alia, those that address structural vulnerabilities of democracy, the fundamentals of good governance, the creation of a suitable political culture, the protection of human rights, the relationship between democracy, peace and development, enhancing the rule of law, improving accountability and transparency in democratic structures of government, the establishment of free and independent media, etc.,

3. *Encourage* the promotion of a democratic culture, the building of institutions for democracy and the affirmation of common principles and interests in the pursuit of democratization, among others, which necessitate the development of core skills and capabilities in order to identify and address the challenges confronting new and restored democracies,

4. *Recognize* the necessity of creating an enabling environment which requires the consolidation and strengthening of democratic institutions, supporting the adherence to common democratic values, principles and standards and the development of appropriate policy and legal frameworks,

5. *Note with satisfaction* that to date, as a result of the deliberations since 1988, we have witnessed greater awareness of the issues related to the promotion of democracy, the advance in the promotion of the topic in the context of peace and development, the ever-increasing recognition of the importance of supporting new or restored democracies, and bringing positive changes in the democracy realm,

6. *Stress* that the need for systematic implementation of ICNRD's recommendations requires the establishment of follow-up steps,

7. *Request* the Chair of ICNRD-6 to take the necessary measures to guarantee appropriate implementation and follow up of the recommendations of the ICNRD Conferences,

(a) The Chair will be assisted by an Advisory Board composed of eight members:

(i) Five governmental representatives nominated on the basis of geographical representation in accordance with United Nations practice, taking into consideration that one of the five representatives will be a representative of the previous Chair of the ICNRD,

(ii) One participant from the ICNRD-6 Parliamentary Forum,

[a] The First Conference was held in Manila in 1988, the Second in Managua in 1994, the Third in Bucharest in 1997, the Fourth in Cotonou in 2000, and the Fifth in Ulaanbaatar in 2003.

(iii) One participant from the ICNRD-6 Civil Society Forum,

(iv) One representative from the United Nations,

(b) The Advisory Board will provide assistance to the Chair on the most effective and practical ways and means to follow up on ICNRD recommendations,

(c) The Advisory Board will hold meetings on an annual basis at such time and duration as it determines,

(d) An annual meeting of the ICNRD will be convened during the annual United Nations General Assembly sessions in New York,

(e) A nucleus secretariat will be established to assist the Chair,

(f) The Permanent Mission of the State of Qatar to the United Nations in New York will liaise with the Chair of the Conference,

(g) The host country of ICNRD-6 will be responsible for all financial obligations to this effect for a three-year period,

(h) Contributions from international donors are welcome,

8. *Request* the Chair of the ICNRD-6 in close consultation with the Advisory Board to submit a progress report to the ICNRD-7 on the effectiveness of the recently established secretariat,

9. *Stress* the importance of more democratic decision-making at the global level,

10. *Encourage* consultation and increased cooperation between the Community of Democracies and ICNRD to facilitate technical cooperation, including exchange of experiences about specific issues of common interest,

11. *Welcome* the establishment of the United Nations Democracy Fund by the Secretary-General, as well as the support provided to it by Member States and civil society organizations, and invite all relevant actors to make use of this strategic and flexible new instrument to further democracy-building efforts,

12. *Recognize* that peacebuilding constitutes an important dimension of democracy-building and appeals to Member States to contribute to the Peacebuilding Fund established by the United Nations Secretary-General,

Cooperation with the United Nations system

13. *Note with satisfaction* the commendable collaboration between the United Nations and the Movement of the ICNRD with respect to promoting and consolidating new and restored democracies and urge the United Nations system to continue exerting efforts to provide the necessary technical assistance to member countries upon request. In this regard, technical cooperation and substantive support services may be in the form of specialized personnel and expert advice, fellowships, documentation, training, materials and statistical data,

14. *Urge* the host Government of the Conference to transmit instruments adopted by the Conference, including the Declaration to the United Nations General Assembly, under the appropriate agenda item and initiate necessary actions for the continued support of the United Nations,

15. The participants *express* their deep appreciation and commend the people and Government of the State of Qatar, in particular the Emir of the State of Qatar, His Highness Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani, for the successful convening of the Sixth ICNRD, and for the facilities and hospitality provided to participants in the conference, and commend the able and wise leadership of the Chair of the conference, His Excellency Sheikh Hamad Bin Jassim Bin Jabr Al-Thani, First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Joint Statement

We, the representatives of Governments, parliaments and civil society around the world gathered at this historic Sixth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies at Doha, the State of Qatar, from 29 October to 1 November 2006, which unites, for the first time, in a joint statement the three significant sectors, dedicated to the democratic ideal, in the common effort to promote democratic values, principles and standards and committed to strengthening a democratic culture around the world,

Reaffirm that democracy is a universal value based on the freely expressed will of the people through elections to determine their own political, economic, social and cultural systems and their full participation in decisions affecting all aspects of their lives,

Reaffirm also our convictions and commitment to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and of international law,

Convinced that the promotion of democracy and the creation of an enabling environment in which it can flourish is not only the individual responsibility of governments, parliaments, civil society, or other stakeholders but is also a responsibility which they share,

Pledge our common commitment to the process of further democratization of our societies,

Reaffirm our shared commitment to the pursuit of core democratic principles and values,

Recognizing the need to cooperate and build effective tripartite partnerships among governments, parliaments and civil society in pursuit of the rule of law, human rights, democratic governance and institution-building,

Acknowledge the need for regular and ongoing dialogue among governmental, parliamentary and civil society actors as well as a regular exchange of views and perspectives to promote sustainable development at all levels in recognition of the interrelationships of democracy, human rights and development,

Commit ourselves to strengthening the tripartite partnership within the framework of ICNRD process through the establishment and enhancement of cooperation and consultation among Governments, parliaments and civil society; and, in close cooperation with the United Nations, organize national, regional and global meetings, seminars and conferences on democracy promotion,

Welcome, as an initial important step and in recognition of the need for systematic implementation of ICNRD recommendations, the creation of an Advisory Board and a nucleus secretariat which supports the Chair, as outlined in the Doha Declaration,

Welcome also the decisions of the Parliamentary Forum and the Civil Society Forum to establish a Democracy Advisory Commission (PM-DAC) and an International Steering Committee, respectively.

The participants commend the State of Qatar for the successful convening and final outcomes of the Conference, which is a hallmark of the State of Qatar's wide experience and international posture in world affairs and wish the Chair of

ICNRD-6 every success in fulfilling the important tasks ahead for the next three years. The participants also express their profound appreciation to the people and government of the State of Qatar for the generosity and hospitality provided to the participants of the conference.